

NORTH UNION PLAYGROUND & CONNECTING PATHWAYS

PRELIMINARY COMMUNITY INPUT

NOVEMBER 18, 2019



North Union Park - Working Group Community Representatives



Phil Tedesco

Tree Committee Member
Thompson Tree Steward
Parent



Leah Broder

Landscape Architect
Thompson Tree Steward
Arlington Public Art Advisory Member
Parent

Community Representatives with successful organizing experience



Campus Tree Care

Pollinator Garden & Outdoor Classroom

North Union Park Community — Thompson Elementary School & Afterschool



Spirited + Vocal

Students
Teachers
Care-Givers



Active + Engaged

PTO
Green Team
Garden Program
Arlington Eats
Community Service



Ecologically-Minded

Edible Gardens
Pollinator Gardens
Tree Stewardship
Compost Program

North Union Park Community – Neighborhood & Town



Senior Citizens



Families



Dog Walkers



Athletes of all ages



Teens

High Use — 365 days a year, morning, noon, and evening



Events — Large and Small



A Seasonal Destination Park



Summer — Spray Park



Winter — Sledding

What are the challenges? FUNCTIONAL + SAFETY ISSUES



Low/no maintenance for equipment and surfacing



Low/no tree care



No irrigation and compacted soils



Limited amenities (no drinking water)

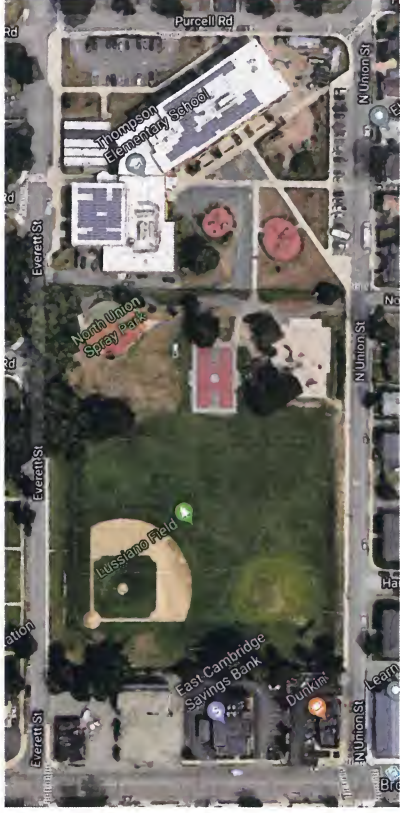


Poor drainage



Erosion

What are the challenges? COHESION, AESTHETICS, ACCESSIBILITY



Park lacks cohesive plan; feels like unrelated set of parts



North Union Street: uninviting; inaccessible; no crosswalk; poor signage



Everett Street: hidden; no curb cut; no cross walk; no signage



Thompson: barrier = chainlink fence



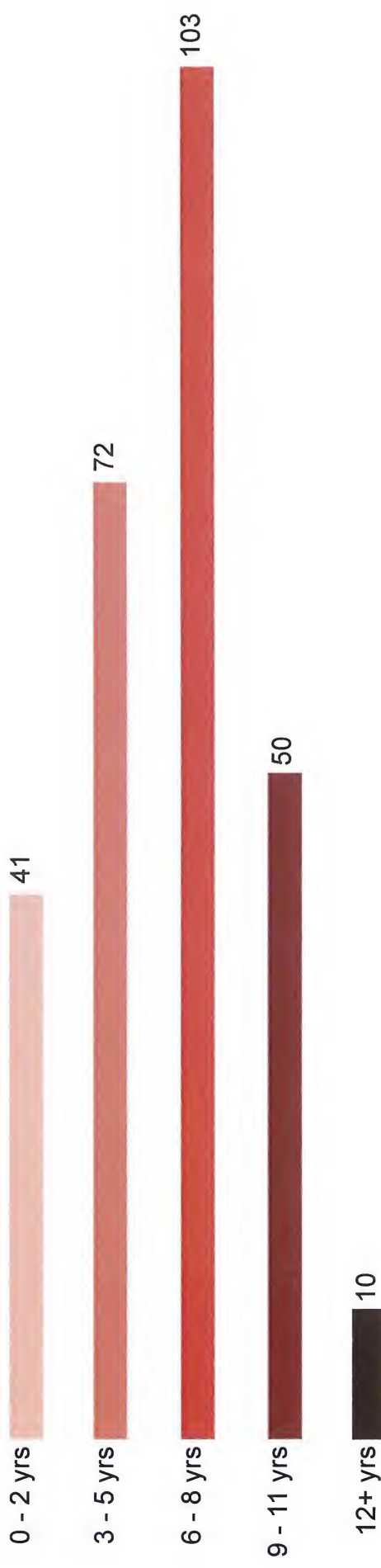
"The place just isn't very inviting at all."

Who comprises the North Union Park Community?

COMMUNITY SURVEY

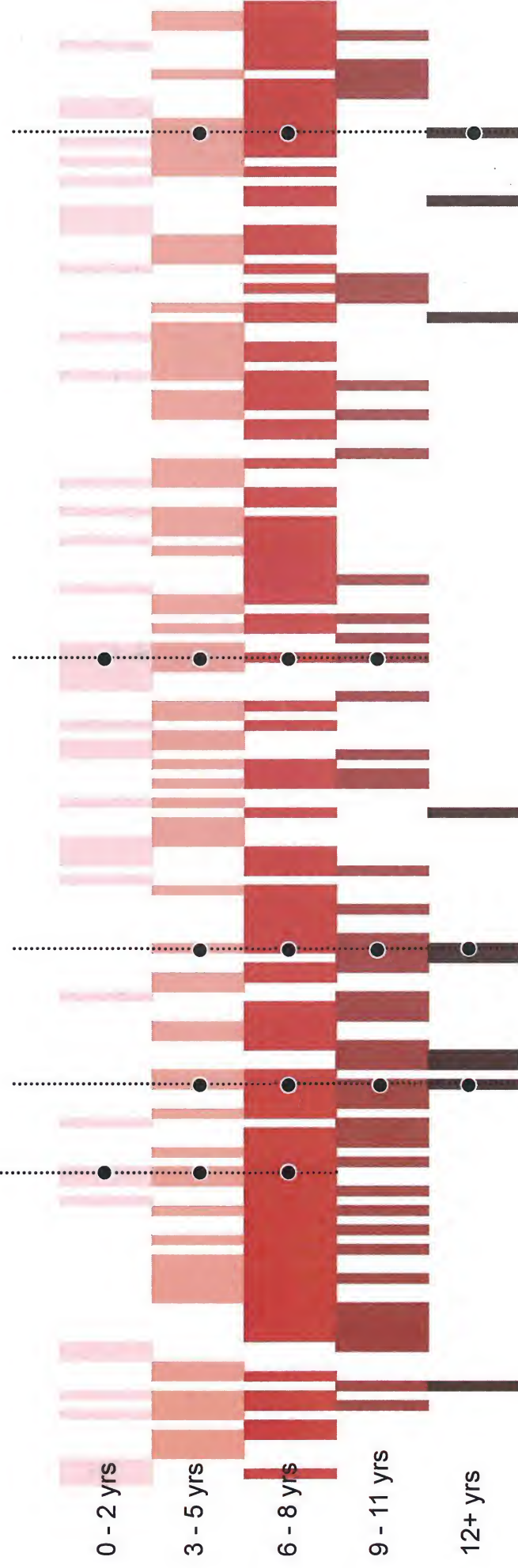
151+ responses

“What are the ages of the children in your family or care who play at North Union playground? Please check all that apply.”



Who comprises the North Union Park Community?

Many families have multiple children of varying ages



What are the Community's preferences?



*North Union playground is so beautifully diverse
and always hopping.*

DIVERSITY

“The families who come here are so diverse. Every time we visit we hear different languages on the playground. Also, we always see **playground users of all kinds**: parents with newborns > teenagers.”

VARIETY

“**We love the variety of activities that are possible...** everything from swinging and climbing and playing in the sandbox, to playing basketball and kicking a soccer ball around. Having all that in such close proximity makes it easy to spend a sustained amount of time outdoors and playing.”

INCLUSIVITY — FOR ALL AGES

“**Please make it for all ages.** As a parent with children ranging from 1 to 11, it is nice to all be able to play together.”

“We like the variety and choice & that there is a **fair amount for different ages**.”

What are the Community's preferences?



*There's good mix of play activities and space types.
It's next to the school and feels like a community gathering spot.*

COHESION

"Would be nice if splashpark and playground felt more like they belong together."

"Somehow the basketball court should be better integrated with the playground."

CONNECTION

"... knit together a divided space"

What are the Community's preferences?



My kids love the flexible open spaces.

FLEXIBLE OPEN SPACE

“Space to run around and ride their bikes around.”

“Spaces where everybody can coexist. Spaces which aren't only designed for typical baseball, basketball etc”

IMAGINATIVE PLAY

“... things which facilitate **free-play / kid-directed imagination....”**

“climbing structures and structures that use the imagination are awesome. We pretend the yellow structure is a bus or rocket ship and we go places like mars or to the store!”

COLLABORATION

“They like the setup of the current structure because they like to play games like “ground is lava” where they have to jump from one area to another.”

What are the Community's preferences?



SWINGING

WATER PLAY

MONKEY BARS

CLIMBING (HIGH!)

SLIDING

SAND PLAY

ACTIVE + CHALLENGING PLAY

“They like when there are **many areas of challenge** and ways to test their arm strength and **high places to climb**.”

“Hoping the NU new structures keep in mind better how kids like to play - areas for hide and seek, monster tag, imaginative play, keep room/places to run and be active.”

LONG SEQUENCES

“My kids have enjoyed the large play structure because it is **one connected sequence** that allows for lots of **pretend play** and for simultaneous use by so many kids not having to “wait for a turn”.

MULTIPLE STRUCTURES

“We like the fact that there is a longish sequence the kids can climb up and over, rather than just small separate structures. But it's nice that there are the two smaller play structures too, **so that not all the kids are on the same structure.**”

What are the Community's preferences?



SEATING

"We love socializing while we watch our kids after school.
Tables would be useful for snacking."

SHADE

"-SHADE! It would be great to have shade over the playground during the summer months... **currently there is like ZERO shade!**"

"... if there were more places to sit and play a game or eat a meal or read a book, and if there was more shade, we would likely come more."

"Consider creating spaces in the shade for the parents to congregate to talk."

TREES

"I love the trees. They give shade which is so important and **they make the playground so pleasant.** Else it feels like a desert. I hope we can preserve them."

What are the Community's goals?



CREATE COHESION

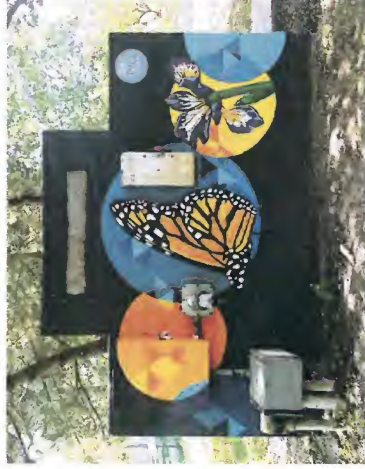
Integrate the playground into a park that functions as a united whole.



IMPROVE CIRCULATION

Create fluid connections within the park.
Make inviting connections to adjacent streets and school.
Create continuous loops for bikes, trykes and scooters.

What are the Community's goals?



ESTABLISH IDENTITY

Use park elements like public art, signage, gates and furnishing to establish North Union Playground identity



ENTRANCES + EDGES

Create safe, accessible entrances from Everett and North Union Streets. Improve the view of the park from the streets and from Thompson School

What are the Community's goals?



CHALLENGE

“**More challenging climbing opportunities** would be great. Older children would use playground more if better suited to their size and more challenging. This playground is heavily used and **needs to be bigger (more playground equipment) not smaller.**”

“Please **don't make overly small or "safe"** like Thompson playgrounds!”

Introduce multiple textures and surfaces for sensory discovery

“A more engaging playground structure like a climbing ropes (like a diamond shaped spider web), more swings, and shade. Kids need to feel challenged.”

STIMULATE

What are the Community's goals?



ENGAGE ALL AGES

“... many older children, 5th grade and above, spend **time in this playground without their parents**, which is awesome and not so common nowadays. It would be good to take this into account to see what could be done to include their needs...”



RISK-TAKING

“Things which let the kids take risks are also good. Not deadly ones, but there’s some evidence that modern playgrounds have been over-safetied and over-directed.”

What are the Community's goals?



INTEGRATE NATURAL ELEMENTS

"It deserves to have more of a park-like setting....rather than an industrial playground."

"Shade and natural elements are great"

ROPE STRUCTURES + ZIP LINES + HIGH CLIMBING

"In some modern or newly built playgrounds they have built a large rope structure and we REALLY would love North Union playground to have one of those."

What are the Community's goals?



ADD SEATING + SHADE
“Please install **more seating and tables under the mature trees** for parents.”



ADD TREES + PLANTING
“Increasing the trees for shade and beauty has been great!
Adding more plantings, landscaping/nature would be lovely.”